Catholic Devotion to Mary

by Blanche Mary Kelly, Litt.D.

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Blessed art thou, O Virgin
Mary, who didst bear the
Lord, the Creator of the
World!

The devotion to Mary, which has always been such a beautiful feature of Catholic life, finds all the justification it requires in the inspired words of Mary herself: “Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me.” She was to be called blessed because Almighty God had done great things to her, had made her worthy to be the Mother of His Son.

Her Divine Motherhood had procured for her graces beyond those bestowed upon any other child of Eve, had raised her to a position of supremacy among human creatures, and entitled her to reverence beyond that accorded to any other. Every mother shares in the esteem in which her son is held. We have had abundant evidence of this in the honor given to the mothers of those who fought in the Great War. When soldiers died without receiving public recognition of their heroism, their decorations were presented to their mothers. It was this instinct to transfer to the mother something of the glory achieved by the son, that made the woman in the crowd, desiring to express her admiration for Christ, exclaim: “Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck!”

When Christ was dying on the Cross He showed a son’s natural solicitude for His Mother, and one of the evidences of His love for John was to give him the care of her. Of John’s love for Himself He was assured, and He knew that He could not lay on him a more joyful task than this care of His

Mother. John received this dying bequest of his Friend as a most sacred charge, and thenceforth he “took her to his own.”

Mary’s position in John’s household must have been one of the highest dignity and honor, and his reverence for her would naturally be shared by all the other Apostles and disciples, who in turn would communicate it eagerly to the new converts whom they won to belief in Jesus.

Belief in Christ spread with miraculous swiftness over the Roman Empire, but it was condemned as a crime against the State, and those who professed it had to do so in secret. In Rome they had to assist at the sacred functions in dark underground cemeteries called catacombs. For three hundred years persecution after persecution was waged against them in an effort to exterminate them, but those who survived only gathered up lovingly the mutilated bodies of those who died for their faith and brought them to the catacombs for burial.

These dark passages under the city where their dead were buried (and in so many instances their dead were saints and martyrs), and where the Mass was said on stones covering their tombs, were as sacred to the early Christians as our loftiest cathedrals are to us. Consequently the walls are covered with inscriptions and symbols of their faith, among which, as we should naturally expect to be the case, are numerous representations of the Virgin Mother and her Divine Child. That in the catacomb of Saint Priscilla has been pronounced by experts the most ancient painting of Our Lady yet discovered, and it is, moreover, of high artistic quality.

When in the year 312 the Emperor Constantine gave the Christians a legal right to freedom of worship, they were no

longer obliged to meet in secrecy and darkness. They emerged from the catacombs and began everywhere to build churches in which to offer the Holy Sacrifice, and many of these were placed under the patronage of Mary. This subject is dealt with below, in the pages devoted to sanctuaries and pilgrimages.

In the first half of the fifth century Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, taught that Mary was the mother of Christ's human nature only, and that it was not lawful to speak of her as the Mother of God. For the condemnation of this heresy a general council was convened at Ephesus in 431, and besides procuring from the Church an official declaration of the true doctrine concerning Mary's position and the honor due to her, it was the occasion of a great public demonstration in her behalf. The people thronged the streets during the sessions of the Council, and when the condemnation of Nestorius was announced and Mary's claim to the title of Theotokos (God-bearer, Mother of God) was thus vindicated, they took up the word and, making it a shout of victory, went in procession through the streets.

Throughout this period Mary appears frequently in the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in the sermons of bishops and priests, and with increasing prominence in the devotion of the faithful. She was praised as the one sinless perfect creature. Ecclesiastical writers considered that, as the coming of the Messias was foretold not only verbally but by means of historic personages who typified some aspect of His personality and His work and are called types, so Mary was foreshown in the same way by various women of the Old Testament. Thus her miraculous maternity was typified by Sara, the wife of Abraham, whose barrenness was made miraculously fruitful; her co-operation in the work of the Redemption was pre-figured by Mary, the sister of Moses, who was long associated in his work.

Debbora, the prophetess, whose counsels brought about the deliverance of the nation from the Chanaanites; the heroic Judith, who slew the enemy of her people; Queen Esther, whose favor with the King averted the destruction of the Jews, were all pointed out as foreshadowings of her who, by the providence of God, was to co-operate in the work of redemption.

By the Middle Ages civilization at its best had become Christian. It was, in fact, designated by the title of Christendom. Not only were entire countries brought under the sway of Christ, but the lives of individual Christians were impregnated with faith. Religion reached the most intimate and sacred depths of the human heart, affected every human relation, influenced every activity, had its share in every avocation, and at the same time was the basis of every public function. By this time, among people living on such familiar terms with divine things, Mary was accorded her rightful place as the most tenderly loved and highly honored of creatures. It was as though John's household had been extended to embrace all men, and Mary held among them the place given to her by John; she was "their own."

Her feasts were kept with great pomp and splendor, her shrines, memorials of her power and kindness, were visited with loving devotion. The literature of the period abounds with legends concerning her which, if they are not true as to details, are evidence of the people's childlike trust in her. Scarcely a town in Christendom but had its church, erected under her patronage, and every church, whether dedicated to her or not, had its lady altar, as has every Catholic church today, and the larger churches had their lady chapels. On her statues and images the faithful delighted to bestow rich gifts, and they made her their heiress at their death. The day began with the Mary Mass, sung at early dawn, and ended with the *Salve* at night. Shrines in Mary's honor stood along

the roadside, the flowers in the field were called by her name, “Mary gold,” “Lady’s mantle,” “Virgin’s, bower,” the field itself would be called “Mary’s Meadow” and the wood “Lady’s Grove.” The portion of food set aside for the poor would be dedicated to her and called “Ladymeat,” or “Saint Mary’s loaf.” The region now known to us as the Baltic Provinces was once known as *Terra Mariae*, “Mary’s Country,” and England as a nation delighted to call itself “Our Lady’s Dower.”

This very title, *Our Lady*, is an evidence of the change that had come upon the world, for these ages of faith were ages of chivalry. According to the pagan codes and even under the Jewish dispensation, woman had been regarded as a being of inferior degree, but in Mary all womankind was raised to a position of honor. A new standard was set up for the emulation of women, a standard of purity, meekness, dignity, modesty, exalted sanctity. Of women aspiring to such heights the knights of the Middle Ages were born, men who recognized in all women a kinship with Mary, who reverenced in them even a remote resemblance to her, and devoted their lives to the defense of what because of her they held above all price, woman’s honor. Then for the first time the ideal, the perfect woman, was described by the term *lady*, meaning woman of exalted station and power, and Mary by common consent designated as *Our Lady*.

Recognition of Mary’s greatness and reliance on her favor with her Divine Son naturally took the form of prayers in praise of her and appeals to her intercession. The “Hail Mary” suggests itself as the earliest of such prayers. The words of the angel’s greeting to Mary were first used in the liturgy of the Church when, at the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great made them the Introit of the Mass for the first Sunday of Advent. But as a separate and popular, as distinguished from a liturgical devotion, the “Hail

Mary” developed from the more lengthy devotion known as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Little Office is so called to distinguish it from the Divine Office, to the daily recitation of which, as it is contained in the Roman Breviary, all clerics of the Latin Church are bound. The Divine Office consists of the Psalms of David, known as the Psalter, so arranged that certain Psalms shall be recited at specified times of the day. Interspersed with the Psalms are canticles, antiphons, hymns, versicles and lessons, according to the feast and the season. The Psalter had from the earliest times constituted the ordinary official prayer of the Church, and the division of the day into seven Hours for prayer was likewise a primitive custom, antedating even Christianity.

The Little Office follows the general lines of the Divine Office. When or under what circumstances it was composed is uncertain, but by the eighth century the Benedictine monks were obliged by their rule to recite its Hours after the Hours of the Divine Office. From the monasteries the Little Office spread to the people, and soon the Primer, or Book of Hours, as it was called, was the favorite book of devotion of all the people. Many copies were in circulation, and from the fact that from them children were taught to read, we derive our name of Primer for a first reading book. In many instances the costliest materials were used for its construction, and its pages were beautified with illuminations and miniatures, still regarded as artistic marvels.

The Psalms of the Little Office praise the greatness of God as shown forth in Mary, and its versicles and lessons apply to her many beautiful passages of Scripture, regarded as prophetic of her coming or as exemplifying her greatness. Of frequent recurrence among these are the words of the

angel’s salutation to Mary and those of Elizabeth’s greeting. These words passed into popular use, and, independently of their place in the Little Office, were repeated many times over by way of salutation, the number being marked by genuflections and prostrations. The petition, “Holy Mary” was added at a much later date, as a result of the feeling that a true prayer should contain some such petition.

The devotion so dear to the hearts of Catholics, now called the Rosary, but long known as Our Lady’s Psalter, had its origin in this repetition of Hail Marys, which held a particular appeal for those who were unable to read the Psalms of the Little Office. The Rosary, to use the words of the Roman Breviary, is “a certain form of prayer wherein we say fifteen decades or tens of Hail Marys, with an Our Father between each ten, while at each of these fifteen decades we recall successively in pious meditation one of the mysteries of our Redemption.”

The earliest form of the Rosary was one hundred and fifty Hail Marys, divided for convenience sake, as were the Psalms for which they were substituted, into three “fifties.” The use of strings of beads for counting them was a natural expedient for keeping track of vocal prayers, and took the place of the genuflections already referred to. The beads themselves, from being used to count Our Fathers said instead of psalms, were long called “paternosters.” The large beads on which the Our Fathers are now said were first used in honor of the Five Wounds of Christ.

Meditation on the mysteries, which is the very essence of the devotion as we now have it, seems to have been introduced under Carthusian influence, and at first took the form of clauses added after the word “Jesus,” recalling Mary’s connexion with some event of His life.

In the hands of Saint Dominic, to whom has been attributed the institution of the Rosary, it became a powerful weapon against the Albigensian heretics of the south of France, who were like the Nihilists or Anarchists of our times. By its means he converted many who had resisted the appeals of learned and eloquent preachers. Alanus de Rupe, a Dominican who lived in the fifteenth century, gave his life to propagating the devotion of the Rosary, its spread being largely accomplished by the Rosary confraternities established by him, the first of which was founded at Cologne in 1475. Before the end of the century they had spread over Europe and were enriched by the popes with many indulgences and privileges which have subsequently been increased. The wide diffusion of the devotion in modern times is chiefly due to the members of the Dominican Order.

The Creed became at an early date the introductory prayer to the Rosary, the Salve Regina was introduced by the Rosary confraternities, and the Glory be to the Father at the end of each decade is an addition of very recent times, and was made by analogy with the Psalms in the Office.

The Antiphons of the Blessed Virgin are four hymns in Mary's honor, one of which is sung at the end of Divine Office and of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary; according to the season of the year. Saint Bonaventure, general of the Franciscan Order, is said to have given them this place in the liturgy about 1274. There are four of these antiphons or anthems, known by their first words in Latin, as the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," the "Ave Regina Coelorum," the "Regina Coeli," and the "Salve Regina."

The "Alma Redemptoris" is sung between the first Sunday of Advent and the feast of the Purification. The authorship is not known with certainty, but it has been ascribed to

Hermann the Lame, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Reichenau, who died in 1054. The anthem has always been extremely popular, apart from its place in the liturgy, as is evident from Chaucer's "Prioresses Tale."

Alma Redemptoris

Maiden! Mother of Him Who redeemed us, thou that remainest,
Heaven's open gate, and the Star of the Sea, come, succor the fallen!
Fallen indeed we are, but fain would rise by they succor.
Thou that beyond nature's course, hast borne in time the Eternal;
Thou that a Virgin before, in, and after that child-birth abidest,
From the Archangel's lips the quickening message receiving,
Mother of Jesus and us, turn thine eyes of mercy on sinners.

The "Ave Regina" is sung from the feast of the Purification to Holy Thursday exclusively. It salutes Mary as the Queen of Heaven, the Dawn of Salvation. Its authorship is unknown, but it is believed to be of monastic origin.

Ave Regina

Hail, O Mary, Queen of heaven,
Queen of Angel worlds on high,
Hail, O Rod to Jesse given,
Blessed Portal of the sky,
Hail, O Lady, bright and glorious,
Clothed in beauty, pure and true,
Virgin! o'er sin's stain victorious,
Sinners for thy succor sue.

The "Regina Coeli" is the anthem for the Paschal season. The authorship is sometimes attributed to Saint Gregory the

Great There is a legend which relates that in 596 Saint Gregory ordered a procession to be held at Easter time for the cessation of a pestilence which was then ravaging Rome. As he walked at the head of his clergy from the church of Ara Coeli past the castle of Hadrian, bearing a picture of Our Lady said to have been painted by Saint Luke, he heard angelic voices singing the first three versicles of the “Regina Coeli,” whereupon he replied in a loud voice: “Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia.” Immediately he beheld above the castle a radiant angel, who put back his sword into its scabbard, and from that time the pestilence ceased. Thereafter the castle was called Sant’ Angelo.

Regina Coeli

Rejoice! rejoice! thou Queen of Heaven. Alleluia.
For He that thee for Son was given, Alleluia.
As, He promised is arisen, Alleluia.
Mother, pray to Him for us, Alleluia.
O Virgin Mary, be glad and rejoice, Alleluia.
For the Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia.

The “Salve Regina,” the most famous of these anthems, is said from Trinity Sunday until Advent. It is now generally considered to have been composed by Hermann the Lame, though the authorship has been attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Another tradition relates that while legate in Germany Saint Bernard added by inspiration the invocations *O clemens, O pia, O dulcis virgo Maria*, when he heard the anthem chanted in the cathedral of Speyer as he entered it in procession on Christmas Eve. The pavement of the cathedral is marked with three plates, showing where the saint genuflected at each invocation.

The “Salve Regina” was always in great favor as a processional chant. The Dominicans introduced it as a

special chant at Compline, and this led to its wide popularity as a distinct evening service, held in honor of Our Lady by the members of trade guilds and confraternities. To this service the general name Salve was given, and the service is believed to have been the origin of our Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which in French is called Salut. The “Salve Regina” is regarded as the special hymn of sailors.

Salve Regina

Hail, Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee we cry, the banished sons of Eve. Toward thee we sigh, weeping and groaning in this vale of tears. Ah, then, thou our Advocate, turn on us those merciful eyes of thine! And, after this our exile, show to us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb. O most merciful, O most gracious, O most sweet Virgin Mary!

Another hymn to Our Lady which occurs in both the Divine Office and the Little Office is the “Ave Maris Stella” (Hail, Star of the Sea). Its author is unknown, though incorrectly said to be Saint Bernard.

Ave Maris Stella

Hail, thou Star-of-Ocean,
Portal of the sky,
Ever-Virgin Mother
Of the Lord Most High!

Oh, by Gabriel’s AVE
Uttered long ago,
EVA’S name reversing,
‘Stablish peace below!

Break the captive’s fetters-
Light on blindness pour-

All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore-

Show thyself a Mother-
Offer Him our sighs,
Who, for us Incarnate,
Did not thee despise.

Virgin of all virgins!
To thy shelter take us-
Gentlest of the gentle!
Chaste and gentle make us.

Still as on we journey,
Help our weak endeavor,
Till with thee and Jesus,
We rejoice forever.

Through the highest heaven
To the Almighty Three,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
One same glory be.

The “Quem terra, pontus, sidera” is an ancient hymn in honor of the Blessed Virgin, ascribed to Venantius Fortunatus, a sixth century poet of great renown. The Roman Breviary divides it into two parts, the second beginning “O gloriosa virginum,” both being said throughout the year in the Divine Office and the Little Office.

Quem Terra Pontus Sidera

The God Whom earth, and sea, and sky,
Adore, and laud, and magnify,
Who o’er their threefold fabric reigns,
The Virgin’s spotless womb contains.
The God, Whose will by moon and sun,

And all things in due course is done,
Is borne upon a maiden’s breast,
By fullest heavenly grace possessed.
How blest that Mother in whose shrine
The great Artificer Divine,
Whose hand contains the earth and sky,
Vouchsafed, as in His ark, to lie!
Blest, in the message Gabriel brought;
Blest, by the work the Spirit wrought;
From whom the great Desire of earth
Took human Flesh and human birth.
All honor, laud, and glory be,
O Jesu, Virgin-born, to Thee!
All glory, as is ever meet,
To Father and to Paraclete.

O Gloriosa Virginum

O Glorious Virgin, ever blest,
All daughters of mankind above,
Who gavest nurture from thy breast,
To God, with pure maternal love.
What we had lost through sinful Eve
The Blossom sprung from thee restores,
And, granting bliss to souls that grieve,
Unbars the everlasting doors.
O Gate, through which hath passed the King!
O Hall, whence light shone through the gloom!
The ransomed nations praise and sing
The Offspring of thy virgin womb!
Praise from mankind and heaven’s host,
To Jesus of a Virgin sprung,
To Father and to Holy Ghost,
Be equal glory ever sung.

One of the oldest forms of popular devotion to Mary is that known as the Angelus. It is said in honor of the Incarnation three times a day at the ringing of a bell, except during the Easter season, when the “Regina Coeli” is said instead, and consists of a triple recitation of the Hail Mary, each preceded by a versicle from Scripture, followed by a concluding versicle and a prayer.

The Angelus

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.
Hail Mary, etc.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to thy word.
Hail Mary, etc.

And the Word was made Flesh
And dwelt amongst us.
Hail Mary, etc.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

It had its origin in the monastic custom of reciting a triple prayer in honor of the Trinity after Compline, the last Hour of the Divine Office, the prayer being accompanied by a ringing of the bell as a signal to those within and without

that the monastery was about to be closed for the night and also as an invitation to the faithful to join in this devotion. Later, the town churches took up this custom of ringing the bell as a means of notifying the people to retire to their houses and to say their prayers. This developed into the curfew bell, rung for a much longer period of time, sometimes amounting to an hour. In Rome, the evening Angelus bell is a sign for clerical students and the clergy generally to return to their homes.

In 1263 Saint Bonaventure ordered that at the ringing of the bell after Compline all the monks in Franciscan houses should recite the Hail Mary thrice, the people likewise being invited to say the prayer. By degrees the hour of the Hail Mary was anticipated and that of curfew retarded. The present fashion of ringing the Angelus bell is a combination of the triple ringing for the Hail Mary and the prolonged ringing for the curfew.

At first there was only the evening Angelus. The morning devotion developed separately from a triple prayer recited in monasteries at break of day. The midday Angelus grew out of a devotion in honor of the Passion, which consisted of the recitation of Our Fathers and later of Our Fathers and Hail Marys. In medieval England the Angelus bell was called the Gabriel bell and in Germany the peace bell. The Angelus did not take its present form until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

A prayer which is regarded as of ancient origin, inasmuch as its authorship is attributed to Saint Bernard, is that known as the “Memorare,” the “Remember,” and very generally as the “Prayer of Saint Bernard,” although it cannot be found literally in Saint Bernard’s works. The error is due to a confusion with Claude Bernard, a devout French priest who on the day of his ordination distributed his large fortune to

the poor and thenceforth devoted himself to their service and to that of condemned criminals. He was known as “the poor priest.” He was untiring in his efforts to spread devotion to Mary, making use of this prayer which he had learned from his father, and to the recitation of which he attributed his own miraculous cure. It is a section of a longer prayer to Our Lady which has been found in old prayer books.

The “Stabat Mater Dolorosa,” which is used as the Sequence of the Mass on both feasts of Our Lady’s Sorrows, is commonly attributed to Jacopone da Todi, a fourteenth century Franciscan poet. It is considered the most pathetic of medieval poems, and is called “the queen of sequences.”

Stabat Mater Dolorosa

At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last;

Through her heart His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish hearing,
Lo! the piercing sword had passed!

O, how sad, and sore distressed,
Now was she, that Mother Blessed
Of the Sole-Begotten One;

Woe-begone, with heart’s prostration,
Mother meek, the bitter Passion
Saw she of her glorious Son.

Who could mark, from tears refraining,
Christ’s dear Mother uncomplaining,
In so great a sorrow bowed?

Who, unmoved, behold her languish
Underneath His Cross of anguish,
‘Mid the fierce unpitying crowd?

For His people’s sins rejected,
She her Jesus, unprotected,
Saw with thorns, with Scourges rent;

Saw her Son from judgment taken,
Her Beloved in death forsaken,
Till His spirit forth He sent.

Fount of love and holy sorrow,
Mother! may my spirit borrow
Somewhat of thy woe profound;

Unto Christ, with pure emotion,
Raise my contrite heart’s devotion,
Love to read in every Wound.

Those five Wounds on Jesus smitten,
Mother! in my heart be written,
Deep as in thine own they be;

Thou, my Savior’s Cross who bearest,
Thou, thy Son’s rebuke who sharest,
Let me share them both with thee!

In the Passion of my Maker
Be my sinful soul partaker,
Weep till death, and weep with thee;

Mine with thee be that sad station,
There to watch the great Salvation
Wrought upon the atoning Tree.

Virgin, thou, of virgins fairest,
May the bitter woe thou bearest
Make on me impression deep;

Thus Christ's dying may I carry,
With Him in His Passion tarry,
And his Wounds in memory keep.

May His Wounds transfix me wholly,
May His Cross and Life-Blood holy
Ebriate my heart and mind;

Thus inflamed with pure affection,
In the Virgin's Son protection
May I at the Judgment find.

When in death my limbs are failing
Let Thy Mother's prayer prevailing
Lift me, Jesus! to Thy throne;

To my parting soul be given
Entrance through the gate of heaven;
There confess me for Thine own!

Mary's Feasts

The day of Christ's birth and that of His manifestation to the Gentiles, called Epiphany, were kept sacred by Christians from the beginning. The anniversary of a martyr's death was observed not as a day of mourning but as a glorious festival. This, rather than the day of his coming into the world, was kept holy and called his "birthday." Over the one lay the shadow of Adam's sin, and over the other the brightness of eternal life, to which he had passed through death.

So it would naturally be with the commemoration of the death of Mary, which was the first of her feasts to be

observed. It was called the feast of the Passing, the Dormition, the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God, and corresponded to the modern feast of her Assumption, celebrated on August 15th. Its observance was very general in the East at an early date, and probably began at Jerusalem, where her tomb was preserved and venerated. It is now the principal feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and ranks as a holy day of obligation with a vigil. It is called *Lady Day in Harvest* to distinguish it from the feast of the Annunciation.

Mary's birth, as well as that of John the Baptist, who had been sanctified in his mother's womb, had always been recognized as holy, and so the feast of her nativity was next in order of establishment Its observance on September 8th is practically universal, though the reason for choosing this date is unknown. Its observance was a preliminary stage in the establishment of the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

This feast of her Immaculate Conception, like all other great feasts of Mary, originated in the East. It was based on a legendary account according to which, as in the case of John the Baptist, an angel announced Mary's birth to her parents, and the object of the feast, called the Conception of Saint Anne, was not so much Mary's sinless conception, as this announcement that the barrenness of Saint Anne was to be brought miraculously to an end. In the course of time this feast became that of the Immaculate Conception of Mary as we now celebrate it on December 8th.

The earliest evidence of it in the Western Church is in the Irish calendars of the eighth century, though its appearance here does not necessarily mean that it was observed in the churches, but only recorded as an historical event. Its public celebration in England, which had been inaugurated by the

Saxon monks, was interrupted for a time when England was conquered by the Normans, but soon restored.

Its re-establishment is partly legendary in character, being attributed to a vision accorded to Helsin, Abbot of Ramsey, when he was commissioned to establish at his monastery, in thanksgiving for his preservation from shipwreck, the feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception. This was about 1070. Saint Anselm, Abbot of Bury Saint Edmunds, established the feast in that monastery in 1121, and was instrumental in its establishment in other monasteries, whence it spread to the whole of England. From England it spread to Normandy, where it was celebrated with such splendor that it was known throughout Europe as "the Feast of the Norman Nation."

The more general observance of the feast was largely due to the Franciscans, who made themselves the champions of the doctrine it celebrated, and finally in 1476 Pope Sixtus IV adopted the feast for the entire Latin Church. In 1708 Clement XI made it a holy day of obligation and in 1879 Leo XIII raised it to a first class feast with a vigil. Mary was chosen patroness of the United States, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, by the Council of Baltimore in 1846, and in 1854 the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed an article of faith by Pius IX.

The feast of the Annunciation has been universally celebrated, at least since the seventh century. It is assigned to March 25th, which was regarded as the actual date of Christ's death, the early opinion being that the creation of the world and Adam's fall having taken place in the Spring season, Christ's coming and His death fittingly took place then also. In the East the feast of the Annunciation has always been observed as a feast of Christ rather than of His Mother. In the Latin Church, though no longer universally a

holy day of obligation, it is a first class feast which, if it falls within Holy Week or Easter week, is transferred to the Monday after the octave of Easter. In Catholic England it was called Lady Day, and in Germany, Our Lady in Lent.

The feast of the Purification of Mary, called Candlemas Day, and now assigned to February 2, was observed primarily as that of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and as such the observance antedates even the feast of the Assumption. The celebration of the feast is distinguished by the blessing of the candles to be used throughout the year in the services of the Church and by a procession in which the participants carry lighted candles. In the Middle Ages it was customary for the procession to leave the church and pass through the surrounding cemetery. The Canticle of Simeon, uttered as he received into his arms “the Light to the revelation of the Gentiles,” is chanted during the procession, the ceremony representing the coming of Christ, the Light of the world, into His Temple. The ceremony of the churching of women was instituted in honor of Mary’s Purification.

At the instance of Saint Bonaventure, the feast of the Visitation on July 2, commemorating Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, was introduced into the Franciscan Breviary in 1263. It was made universal by Urban VI in the hope that Mary by her prayers would heal the schism at that time dividing the Church.

The feast of her Presentation in the Temple by her parents originated in the East, where it has been observed since an early age. It was introduced into the Western Church in 1372 through the influence of a French nobleman who had held a diplomatic post in the East. The date is November 21.

On January 23 is kept the feast of Mary’s Espousals to Joseph. It was first granted to the nuns of the Annunciation

in 1517, and subsequently to other religious orders. Various dioceses in turn petitioned for its observance. Although it has never been officially extended to the whole Church its observance is practically universal.

The feast of the Holy Name of Mary was instituted in Spain in 1513. It was extended to the universal Church by Innocent XI in 1683, in gratitude for the defeat of the Turks by Sobieski on September 12th of that year. It was for a time observed on the Sunday after the feast of Mary's nativity, but is now permanently assigned to September 12th.

There are two feasts commemorating the Sorrows of Mary, one on September 18th and one on the Friday in Passiontide. The first originated in Germany in 1413 and was instituted by way of expiating the impiety of certain heretics who were destroying sacred images. It spread to other countries and was already widely observed when in 1727 Benedict XIII extended it to the entire Latin Church, giving it the title of the Seven Dolors. It had been previously observed in various places as the Compassion, the Mourning, the Transfixion of Mary, and as Our Lady of Pity.

The second feast was granted in 1668 to the Servite Order (Servants of Mary), their principal devotion being the compassionating of her sorrows, the sharpness of her grief on the following occasions being especially commemorated: the prophesying of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of the Holy Child, her meeting with her Son on the road to Calvary, while she stood beneath the Cross, His taking down from the Cross and His burial. The special title for Mary in her grief is Mater Dolorosa, or Addolorata. Her loneliness and desolation on Holy Saturday, when Christ's Body lay in the tomb are commemorated in Spain under the title "Our Lady of Solitude." On both feasts of the Seven Dolors the "Stabat

Mater Dolorosa” is used as the Sequence of the Mass, and also in the Office.

The feast of the Holy Rosary, observed on the first Sunday of October, but no longer as a first class feast, was instituted by Gregory XIII in 1573 at the request of the Dominican Order. Prior to that time the Mass of the day contained a commemoration of the Rosary, by authorization of Pius V in thanksgiving for the Christian victory over the Turks at the battle of Lepanto, obtained, it was believed, through the processions of the Rosary confraternities at Rome. A plenary indulgence is granted on this feast in every church where the Rosary confraternity has been erected, on the occasion of every visit to the church.

The second Sunday of October is dedicated to the Maternity of Mary and the third to her Purity. The entire month is devoted to her honor under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary, but it is the month of May that is regarded in a particular manner as Mary’s month. From pre-Christian times it was customary to hold a May festival in honor of the coming of Spring and the entire month was regarded as an appropriate time for lovers to give evidence of their affection, which they did through the presentation of May garlands. The spring festival included the setting up of a May tree or bough, about which the people danced, and the crowning of a Queen of the May. It was Blessed Henry Suso a German Dominican of the fourteenth century, who first directed these ceremonies to Our Lady’s honor.

Several centuries later a devout priest, Father Annibale Dionisi, compiled a little book of devotion, the object of which was to dedicate an entire month, day by day, to Mary. The first edition was issued in 1724, and a great many such books followed. At first there was no question of any particular month, but very soon the devotion was connected

with the month of May, which was being publicly observed in Italy in 1739, and is now pre-eminently Mary's month.

The dedication of Saturday to Mary's special honor is of very ancient origin.

Shrines and Pilgrimages

As has already been pointed out, the worship of the early Christians was carried on in catacombs, private dwellings and other places where secrecy could be observed. When it became possible to erect a building for the express purpose of divine worship it was called the House of God or the House of Prayer. After the Peace of the Church such edifices were multiplied, and in most cases the scenes of martyrdom were naturally chosen as their sites. In many such instances the martyr's relics were preserved there, and the church dedicated to God under his patronage.

Two cities have laid claim to the honor of possessing the first church under the patronage of the Mother of God, Jerusalem and Ephesus. The tomb of the Blessed Virgin in the Garden of Gethsemani at Jerusalem was from the earliest times a place of reverent pilgrimage. The Church of the Assumption on this spot is subterranean and dates from the fourth or fifth century. The tomb itself was separated by the Christians from the solid rock in which it had been hollowed and forms a distinct edifice, the outer and inner walls of which are covered over with tapestry. Along the east wall of the interior stretches a kind of shelf, about four feet from the ground, on which was laid the untainted body of God's Mother.

There is said to have been a church under Mary's patronage at Ephesus at the time of the Council of 431, but the tradition is doubtful. As a memorial of this council, however, Pope Sixtus III dedicated to Mary the great Liberian Basilica

on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, since known as St Mary Major. It is so called because it ranks before all the churches of Our Lady in Rome.

The legendary account of its origin relates that a Roman patrician who owned the land on which the basilica stands, having no children, agreed with his wife to bestow their property upon Mary. They besought her to give them some token of her wishes as to its disposal, and on a certain night both received in sleep the behest to build a church in her honor on the Esquiline at the place which they should find the next morning covered with snow. Hastening to inform the pope of what had transpired, they found that Liberius had in the same manner received a command to co-operate with them. Accompanied by clergy and people, Pope Liberius went to the Esquiline, and found a portion of the ground covered with snow, a miraculous occurrence at that season, when the Roman heat is most intense.

The basilica was begun in 358 and completed in 360. It was enlarged and beautified by Pope Sixtus III, as a memorial of the vindication of Mary’s dignity as Mother of God. Because of this legend, Saint Mary Major’s is likewise known as Our Lady of the Snow (Sancta Maria ad Nives), and the feast of Mary under this title is celebrated on August 5, the traditional date of the miracle. In the basilica itself the legend of the snow is commemorated by a shower of white rose leaves from the balcony of one of the chapels.

The church now preserves relics of the crib, said to have been brought from the Holy Land during the pontificate of Pope Theodore. For this reason it is also called Our Lady of the Manger and Sancta Maria ad Praesepe, from the Latin word for crib.

The Church of Sancta Maria Antiqua is considered to rival Saint Mary Major's in antiquity.

Saint Pulcheria, Empress of Constantinople, who supported the opponents of the Nestorian heresy, built at Constantinople three churches in honor of the Mother of God, in one of which, that in the quarter of the Blachernae, were deposited relics said to be the grave-clothes of Mary. They were sent to Pulcheria's husband, the Emperor Marcian, by Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem.

Many traditions ascribe even to Apostolic times the dedication of churches to Mary. Saint Peter is said to have built in her honor a church at Tortosa, Syria, when he was on his way to Antioch. In the Middle Ages this shrine was the object of a famous pilgrimage. Saint John placed under her patronage the church at Lydda, Saint Barnabas, that of Milan, while the original shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar, at Saragossa, Spain, is said to have been built by Saint James as a result of a command of the Blessed Virgin, who appeared to him as he knelt in prayer on the banks of the Ebro. The miraculous image here enshrined is the object of the most fervent devotion of the people of the Iberian peninsula, in which area alone there are more than five hundred and fifty shrines in honor of Mary.

The Christian Faith was carried to Gaul, which, roughly speaking, corresponds to modern France, by Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. According to tradition, at the place where they landed on the shore of Provence, they set up an altar of baked clay, placing it under Mary's patronage, and upon it the Holy Sacrifice was offered for the first time on French soil. As Our Lady of the Sea this shrine has had an annual attendance (on May 25) of 20,000 pilgrims down to modern times.

France proved such fertile ground for the seed of devotion to the Mother of God that a list of her shrines in that country contains over 2000 entries. Of these the most important are Notre Dame de Fourvieres, at Lyons, Notre Dame de Chartres, Notre Dame de Boulogne, Notre Dame de Liesse, and the great shrine at Lourdes, famous the world over for its astounding miracles.

Lyons was originally a Roman city which received the Faith from Saint Pothinus, a disciple of Saint Polycarp, who had in turn conversed with many who had seen Christ during His earthly life. Saint Pothinus brought with him to Lyons an image of Our Lady, which he placed in a crypt where it is still to be seen, beneath the church of Saint Nazaire. The shrine of Our Lady of Fourvieres, however, was not established until 840, when the people erected it on the site of the ancient Roman Forum (whence it derives its name), then fallen to ruins. The church was enlarged in the twelfth century with material taken from these ruins. Destroyed during the wars of religion, it was subsequently restored and survived the Revolution.

The people of Lyons have on several occasions attributed their deliverance from pestilence to Our Lady of Fourvieres. It was here that the feast of the Immaculate Conception was first solemnized on French soil. When the feast of Mary’s Nativity had been decreed at the General Council of Lyons in 1245, it was made the patronal feast of Notre Dame de Fourvieres and celebrated annually with great splendor.

The cathedral of Chartres, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, is regarded as the most beautiful church in the world. It is the delight of artists and poets, who vie with. one another in describing its many glories, which a recent writer has summed up in the phrase, “the Paschal joy of Chartres.” In

its perfection it expresses the faith of the people of the Middle Ages.

According to legend, when the Christian missionaries came to this region, they found preserved in a grotto and venerated by the Druids, the figure of a woman, seated, with a child upon her knee, and below the inscription: “To the virgin who shall bear a Child.” This was considered to be a remnant of the tradition existing among the Gentiles concerning the coming of a Redeemer, and the missionaries had no difficulty in winning to Christianity people who were in expectation of the news they brought. The statue became an object of Christian veneration under the title Our Lady Underground, and during the ages of faith throngs of pilgrims flocked to the crypt beneath the cathedral of Chartres. In the ninth century Charles the Bald bestowed upon the cathedral a veil said to have been that of Our Lady.

In 1070 the old cathedral was destroyed by fire and the present magnificent structure is the result not only of the generous alms but of the personal labors of people of all stations. Men and women, noble and peasant, sometimes in hundreds, did not disdain to harness themselves to the carts in which the massive stones were drawn, and all this was accomplished in the reverent silence which characterized the building of Solomon’s Temple. Among the countless evidences of love which hang near this shrine, the wampum belt of sea-shells sent by the Abenaki Indians of Maryland has a particular appeal. It is inscribed: “To the Virgin Mother her most devoted Abenakis.”

The origin of Our Lady’s shrine at Boulogne-sur-mer, a town at the mouth of the River Liane, on the Channel, is likewise legendary. The statue is said to have come to port on a mysterious ship, while at the same time the people assembled for prayer in the little church on the hilltop

beheld an apparition of Our Lady, who told them of the ship's arrival and directed that the statue be set up for veneration in that place. The shrine acquired such renown that in the Middle Ages a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Boulogne was often enjoined by sentence of the lay tribunals of France. When Boulogne was besieged by the English under Henry VIII the sanctuary was made the target for their guns, and when the city was captured the miraculous image was carried to England. It was recovered, to be captured by the Calvinists in the wars of religion, but after forty years it was again recovered unhurt, despite many attempts on the part of the heretics to destroy it. However, only a hand survived the excesses of the Revolution and the modern statue was made as faithful a copy as possible of that destroyed. The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Compassion was established at this shrine to pray for the return of England to the Catholic Faith.

Legendary, also, is the origin of the shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse in the diocese of Soissons, but the clearly established miracles which have taken place there obtained for it a popularity that has been surpassed only by that of Lourdes. Louis XIV came in person to place the kingdom of France under the patronage of Notre Dame de Liesse. Cities vied with one another in enriching it with gifts and an annual concourse of 50,000 came thither from incredible distances.

The story of Lourdes is too well known to require repetition in detail. Here there is no question of legend or remote antiquity. On February 11, 1858, Bernadette Soubiroux, a fourteen-year-old peasant girl, saw in the hollow of a rock called Massabielle the figure of God's Mother. Between that date and July 16, the child saw her eighteen times. Once at Mary's direction she loosened the soil and a fountain gushed forth which continues in great abundance to this day and provides the miraculously endowed waters of the bathing

pools. Again Our Lady pointed out the spot where she wished a chapel built and expressed the desire that it be visited by pilgrims. A vast basilica now stands at the foot of the rock where Mary set her holy feet and said: “I am the Immaculate Conception.” More than 4000 cures took place at Lourdes within the first fifty years of the pilgrimage. There is a bureau of physicians for examining the authenticity of the cures, which are acknowledged to be beyond the power of natural forces and due only to Divine intervention. It is estimated that more than a million travellers come annually to Lourdes. In this favored spot, where the very air is redolent of the supernatural, the great ones of the earth are happy to act as litter-bearers to the helpless sufferers who come to seek the help of God’s Mother and ours.

At Oostacker in Belgium is a shrine which is regarded as the daughter of Lourdes, in imitation of which it is built. The pool contains water from Massabielle and a number of miracles have been performed there.

At La Salette, in the diocese of Grenoble, Mary is said to have appeared to two shepherd children, under circumstances which aroused heated controversy that has been silenced by the explicit command of the Holy See.

The basilica of Loretto, in the diocese of Recanati, Italy, enshrining what is believed to be the Holy House in which Gabriel sought out Mary and in which the Word was made Flesh, ranks foremost of all the sanctuaries of Mary in the world. The so-called santa casa stands beneath the dome of the great church encased in splendidly sculptured marble. Within the little house, behind the altar, stands the image of Our Lady of Loretto. Upon the eastern wall of the enclosure is an inscription, in part as follows:

“Here the Most Holy Mary, Mother of God, was born; here she was saluted by the Angel; here the Eternal Word of God was made flesh. Angels transferred this habitation first from Palestine to Tersatto in Illyria, in the year of salvation 1291, Nicholas IV being then Sovereign Pontiff. Three years afterwards, in the commencement of the pontificate of Boniface VIII, it was transferred into Picenum, near to Recanati city, and placed by the ministry of Angels in the wood of this hill; where, having changed its place three times within the space of a year, it at length rested by God’s will three hundred years ago.”

On the reredos of the altar within is a Latin inscription which translated runs: “Here the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

The devotion to Mary known as the Litany of Loretto takes its name from this sanctuary, though whether or not it originated here is a matter of dispute. Litanies were used from the earliest times in the services of the Church, being especially employed in the religious processions, called litanies, which preluded these services. The oldest form of a litany to Mary is said to exist in an Irish manuscripts dating from the fourteenth century. The earliest litanies were lengthy and involved, but the simple form now in use had become customary at Loretto by the end of the fifteenth century. It was introduced into the basilica of Saint Mary Major in 1597 and is now in general use throughout the world. The litany of Loretto is one of the five litanies approved for public recitation.

Other Italian shrines of Mary are at Genezzano, where the famous picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel is venerated, Grottaferrata, a Greek monastery said to have been built at the express direction of Our Lady and deriving its name from its Madonna, miraculously found in a grotto; Messina, which

at one time possessed eighty-seven images of Mary, all objects of pilgrimage; Mantua, where, under the title of Our Lady of Grace, an image of Mary attributed to Saint Luke is honored, and the picturesque mountain shrine of Cannetto in the Abruzzi.

In pre-Reformation England there were shrines of Our Lady at Canterbury, Glastonbury, where, owing to the costliness of the gifts, her chapel was called the Silver Chapel, Coventry, Ely, Ipswich, Worcester, Lincoln, Tewkesbury, and, greatest of all, Walsingham. Here in 1060 a little chapel had been built in imitation of the Holy House, then at Tersatto in Illyria, and within it a wooden image of the Mother and Child attracted the faithful in such throngs that the Milky Way was believed to point the pilgrims' path to what was called the Holy Land of Walsingham. During the suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII, who some years previous had visited the shrine barefoot, the image of Our Lady of Walsingham was brought to London and publicly burnt. The beautiful "Lament for Walsingham" was probably written shortly after this and shows how dear to the people was the violated sanctuary:

Level, level with the ground
The towers do lie,
Which, with their golden, glittering tops,
Pierced once the sky.

Where were gates no gates are now:
The way unknown.
Where the press of peers did pass
While far her fame was blown.

Owls do shriek where the sweetest hymns
Lately were sung

Toads and serpents hold their dens
Where the palmers did throng.

Weep, weep, O Walsingham,
Whose days are nights
Blessings turned to blasphemies,
Holy deeds to despites;
Sin is where Our Lady sate:
Heaven is turned to hell:
Satan sits where our Lord did sway-
Walsingham, oh, farewell.

The chief shrines of Our Lady in Ireland were at Dublin (Saint Mary's Abbey), Muckross, Navan, Youghal and Trim, the two last-named being the most renowned. Saint Mary's Abbey at Trim, County Meath, was founded by Saint Patrick in 432, his nephew, Loman, being placed at the head of it. The origin of the shrine is lost in remote ages, the first mention of it in 1415 showing that a miraculous image of Our Lady in the abbey church had long been the object of pilgrimage. During the centuries when the country was ravaged by wars between the native Irish and the invading Saxons the pilgrims to Trim were so protected by law that they journeyed in perfect safety. When the storm of the Reformation broke upon Ireland the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Trim shared the fate of that of Walsingham, being publicly burnt.

The shrine of Mary of the Graces at Youghal in the diocese of Cloyne was not so ancient as that of Trim, but the renown of its miracles justified its title and brought throngs of pilgrims to Mary's feet. – The image, which is in carved ivory, about three inches high, of fifteenth century Italian workmanship, is said to have drifted ashore enclosed in a log of wood and its presence to have been discovered by the miracles wrought through its agency. It was set up in the Dominican

priory, where it remained until the monastery was dissolved and bestowed upon Sir Walter Raleigh. When the friars were expelled from the country in 1698 they entrusted the image to the custody of a Catholic gentleman, to have it restored in the following century, when they were able to return to Youghal. It is now in the Dominican church of Saint Mary, Cork.

In Ireland, however, where the ages of faith have never come to an end, the entire country may be said to be a shrine of Mary. The fire that Patrick kindled on the Hill of Slane has not only never flickered or gone out, but with the centuries it has only gained in intensity. The Faith took root in Ireland without persecution or blood-shed, but it has been kept only at the price of a prolonged martyrdom, and the Irish love for Mary has had no small share in their perseverance.

When the Irish received Christ they received His Mother, even as John received her, and the Two have never been separated in their hearts. “God and Mary save you,” is their greeting to one another, “God and Mary go with you,” their farewell, “My soul to God and Mary,” pray the dying in their last hour, “May God and His Mother protect you and may you never know want,” is the beggar’s blessing.

Here as elsewhere she has her churches and her holy wells, but here every house may be called her sanctuary. Every home has an altar in her honor, and from innumerable Irish hearths through the innumerable years has gone up night after night the sound of the rosary, the “blessed beads.” The Irish beads are worn thin from use. “Aye, I’m at the beads,” said an old woman to the author of “Down West,” “They’re me whole dependence, till sometimes I do wonder if it’s not too free I’m makin,’ takin’ the attention of the Blessed Mother so often from her Son.”

Every church has its angelus bell, and at its sound all activity ceases; the men at work in the fields, the women in the house, the children at their play, fall on their knees and greet Mary with Gabriel's greeting. "Mary of the Graces" is invoked at rising and on going to rest, on sitting down to meals and when covering the fire for the night. Children are lulled to sleep to the sound of her name and committed to the protection of her "mantle of blue."

All the poetry and tenderness of the Celtic nature are infused into the Irish names for hen She is *Myden dheelish*, the darling Virgin, the Banner of Peace, the Blossom of the Patriarchs, the Palace of Christ, the Ladder of Heaven. Her own name of Mary they hold so sacred that in the form of Muire it is reserved for her alone. At least one daughter in every family is baptized in her honor, *Maire*, but none save sinless Mary is called Muire.

The month of May in Ireland witnesses such an outburst of fervent devotion to Mary that she seems almost to be walking visibly among her children, and on Christmas Eve every Irish door stands open by way of welcome to her who on this night found so many doors closed against her in Bethlehem.

But if other evidence of the strength of their devotion were wanting there is always the Irish love for purity, Mary's virtue, as manifested in the multitude of chaste wives, of consecrated virgins, and the cohorts of her sworn Knights, the priests of Irish blood, the glory of the Church of her Son.

Spain's national shrine at Saragossa has already been referred to. Blessed Peter Canisius regarded the sanctuary of Mary among the lofty rugged peaks of Montserrat in Catalonia as foremost in the world for the number of its pilgrims and the sanctity prevailing there. Extravagant

legends cloud the story of its origin. It is probable that the miraculous image of Mary enshrined there and said to have been discovered in one of the mountain's caves, had been hidden from the fury of the Moors, then devastating the country. The shrine is in the custody of the Benedictine monks. When Spain was at the height of its glory the wealth of this sanctuary was incalculable. An inscription on a marble tablet commemorates the fact that in the year 1522 Saint Ignatius Loyola kept a night's vigil of arms before Our Lady of Montserrat and there consecrated his life to the service of her Son.

The little town of Guadalupe, near Calatrava, venerates a statue of the Blessed Virgin sent by Pope Gregory the Great to Saint Leander, and by him hidden with other treasures from the Moorish invaders. It remained concealed for six centuries, when its hiding place was revealed to a shepherdess by an apparition of Our Lady. It was first enshrined in a little chapel but later a magnificent church was built. However, the renown of this sanctuary has been overshadowed by another of the same name in Mexico, three miles northeast of Mexico City, the story of whose origin is both astounding and beautiful.

On Saturday, December 9, 1531, Mary appeared to an Indian convert, Juan Diego, as he was on his way to Mass and commissioned him to have the bishop build a church on the place where she stood. The bishop did not at once accept Juan Diego's story and bade him, if he should see the Lady again, to ask her for a sign. Twice more she appeared to Juan to receive the bishop's answer and when the Indian had occasion to go again to the city he went round by another way to evade her, only to be met once more by the gracious Mother. This time he asked a sign and was told to gather roses from the rock into his cloak and carry them carefully to the bishop. He obeyed, although it was the winter season,

and when he came before the bishop and opened his cloak, all those present fell upon their knees, for a life-size picture of Mary as she had appeared to Juan Diego shone from the coarse garment. This is the picture now venerated in a magnificent shrine and visited by such numbers of the faithful that a town has grown up on what was once a barren hillside.

The Benedictine abbey of Einsiedeln in Switzerland possesses a miraculous statue of Mary which the hermit, Saint Meinrad, set up for veneration in the seventh century on the slopes of Mount Etzel. Eberhard, another hermit, built a chapel about it and founded the monastery of which he became first abbot. The chapel now stands encased in sculptured marble in the vast abbey church. The pilgrimages have continued without interruption from the time of Saint Meinrad. In normal times from 150,000 to 200,000 pilgrims come annually to Einsiedeln.

A daughter house of Einsiedeln has been founded at Maria Stein, near Basle, where in an underground chapel an ancient statue of Mary attracts many pilgrims.

The little town of Mariazell in Austria has been for centuries the centre of an annual pilgrimage, the day for which was formerly appointed by royal edict. Nearly every ruler of the Hapsburg line come here to do honor to Mary.

The shrine of Our Lady of Consolation at Luxemburg in Holland was built by the Jesuits in 1624. The foundation stones were all inscribed with the name of Mary. Many miraculous cures have taken place there, especially in 1640, in which year the chapel was finished, but perhaps the greatest miracle of all is the extraordinary growth in the vicinity of devotion to Mary. A pious woman who made the pilgrimage to Luxemburg brought back to her home in

Kevelaer, Bavaria, a picture of Our Lady of Consolation. The miraculous occurrences which ensued led to its being enshrined, and it is now the centre of a renowned pilgrimage in the custody of the Oratorians.

The national shrine of Poland at Czenstochowa possesses a picture of Mary said to have been painted in her lifetime by Saint Luke.

The chief shrines of Our Lady in North America are Notre Dame de Bon Secours at Montreal, Our Lady of Lourdes at Notre Dame University, Indiana, Our Lady of Martyrs at Auriesville, and Our Lady of Mercy at Hoboken, New Jersey. The shrine in Montreal is in the church of the Sisters of Notre Dame, first built in 1675. The beautifully sculptured wooden statue there revered was stolen in 1831, but replaced by Bishop Bourget in 1847 and the pilgrimage revived.

The town of Notre Dame, Indiana, with the pilgrimage shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, grew out of the foundation in 1842, in what was then a wilderness, of the; university of Notre Dame du Lac, by Rev. Edward Sorin, subsequently superior general of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. Besides the university buildings Notre Dame contains the mother house of the Congregation and also that of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Saint Mary’s of the Immaculate Conception.

Our Lady of Martyrs marks the spot where Father Isaac Jogues, the Jesuit missionary, and his companions, Goupil and Lalande, were martyred by the Mohawk Indians. The site was purchased in 1844 by Father Joseph Loyzance, S.J., then pastor of Saint Joseph’s Church, Troy, New York, who, on August 15th of that year, led the first band of pilgrims to the shrine he had erected under the patronage of Our Lady of Martyrs.

The Church of Our Lady of Mercy in Hoboken, in charge of the Passionist Fathers, contains as an altar piece a copy of the Rimini Madonna of Mercy.

There was formerly an ancient shrine known as that of Our Lady of the Milk (*Nuestra Señora de la Leche*), at Saint Augustine, Florida. The shrine owed its name to the statue, brought originally from Spain, which represented the Blessed Virgin with her Divine Child at her breast. The devotion of the people and officers of the garrison to Mary's maternity led to the erection of a chapel, which was sacked several times by invaders from Georgia and Carolina, and the original statue has long since disappeared. The chapel was the scene of the martyrdom by Indians of Father Rodriguez, a Franciscan, who was murdered in his vestments as he finished his mass. The chapel which Bishop Verot built on the ruins of the shrine was destroyed by a wind storm. The present bishop of Saint Augustine, Michael Curley, has had built on the old foundations a stone chapel capable of withstanding wind and storm.

The sanctuary of Our Lady of Chiquinquira, in Colombia, South America, although of ancient origin, links this record of Mary's shrines with the present day in the solemn canonical coronation of the picture which took place there in July, 1919. The picture was originally painted on a coarse cotton blanket by Alonso de Narvaez at the order of Antonio de Santa Mara, a distinguished citizen of Chiquinquira, who wished to place it in the little chapel of Our Lady which he had erected in front of his house. It was long an object of veneration to both Spaniards and Indians, but in time the canvas was greatly damaged and the colors became so faded that the chaplain declared his unwillingness to say Mass before it, and it was accordingly discarded.

At Seilor de Santa Mara’s death his brother came to Chiquinquira, bringing with him his wife, Maria de Ramos, a devout lover of Mary. She was greatly distressed to find the discarded picture lying covered with dust in a corner of the chapel. She set it up against the wall and offered her daily devotions before it, beseeching Mary very fervently not to conceal herself thus from the eyes of her children. One day she left the chapel after a longer visit than usual, but scarcely had she done so when an Indian woman and her little son passed the open door, and the child cried out to his mother to look within, for God’s Mother was standing there.

The household was summoned to behold the image surrounded by light and resting upright upon the floor. As the light faded it became evident that the colors of the painting had been restored, a fact attested by both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The people of Chiquinquira erected a larger chapel to receive the miraculous picture, to which many pilgrimages have been made and before which many graces have been obtained.

The solemn canonical crowning granted in 1910, on petition of the Dominican custodians of the shrine, was appointed by the provincial council of 1916 to take place during the Marian Congress of 1919. The ceremonies commenced on June 28th, when Mary began her triumphal progress from Chiquinquira to Bogota. The official escort was composed of military cadets in dress uniform and the President of the Republic walked in the procession. The crown, fashioned of the jewels of the women of Colombia and placed on Mary’s brow by Bishop Maldonado, is valued at $11,000.

Our Lady’s Titles

In seeking Mary’s patronage Catholics have appealed to her by a multitude of titles expressive at once of her greatness,

power and compassion and of their love and confidence. Perhaps the most frequently used is her lovely name of Mary, with its countless variations and adaptations, such as Maryhelp, Marymount, Maryville, Villa Maria. Next comes the title Our Lady with its French form Notre Dame, joined to a phrase recalling some special aspect of Marian devotion. In the United States many churches are given the name of one of the famous European shrines, such as Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The Poles group themselves under her patronage as Our Lady of Czenstochowa; the Lithuanians, as Our Lady of Vilna; the Maronites, as Our Lady of Lebanon; the Italians, as Our Lady of Pompeii or Mount Carmel; the Spaniards, as Our Lady of the Pillar; the Mexicans, Our Lady of Guadalupe, etc.

Her sufferings are compassionated under the names Our Lady of Sorrows, Maria Addolorata, the Seven Dolors, and her tenderness appealed to in the invocations, Our Lady of Refuge, of Pity, of Consolation, of Solace, of Prompt Succor, of Mercy, of Grace, of Hope.

Sometimes it is her nearness to her Son that is honored, as when she is called Our Lady of the Sacred Heart or of the Blessed Sacrament; sometimes it is her pre-eminence as “the first born before all creatures,” and then she is hailed as Queen of Heaven, Regina Coeli, Queen of Angels, Queen of All Saints, Queen of Apostles.

Under the title “Star of the Sea,” she is venerated as the patroness of sailors, and invoked for safety and prosperity at sea. Seaside dwellers call upon her as Notre Dame du Bon Port, Notre Dame du Bon Voyage. The beautiful title “Our Lady of the Lake” is another aspect of the tendency to invoke her protection upon a particular locality, as is also Our Lady of the Fields, Our Lady of the Mountain, Saint

Mary’s of the Mount, Marymount, Mount Saint Mary’s, Maryknoll, Saint Mary’s of the Woods.

It is scarcely necessary to mention all the churches, shrines, chapels and convents which commemorate some mystery or event of her life, such as her Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation, her Maternity, her Purification, her Assumption, or some form of devotion to her, as the Holy Rosary, the Sacred Heart of Mary, the Most Pure Heart of Mary. They are all evidences of the vitality of the Catholic faith, to which the events of nineteen centuries ago are the realities of today.

Confraternities of Mary

Two elements of life in the Middle Ages contributed to the development of the present day confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the religious orders and the trade guilds. At an early date it became customary for lay persons living in the world to associate themselves with the great religious orders, keeping a modified form of their rule and wearing their distinctive habit, either constantly or at least during religious services. By degrees, instead of the entire habit, its most distinctive feature, the long scapular hanging from the shoulders, was adopted. This finally was greatly reduced in size, so that at present scapulars consist of two pieces of cloth (two and three-quarter inches long by two inches wide), connected by two strings which pass over the shoulders and allow the scapulars to hang down in front and behind.

Not all the scapular confraternities are under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but the best known and most widespread of them is the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (brown scapular), which existed as early as 1280. The tradition concerning its origin relates that the

Blessed Virgin appeared to Saint Simon Stock, Superior General of the Carmelite Order, at Cambridge, England, on July 16, 1251, and offered him the scapular as the badge of her confraternity and a sign of grace for all its wearers, with the pledge that none wearing it at the hour of death should perish eternally. This privilege, which is called the first privilege of the Carmelite scapular, amounts to saying that all those who have been invested by the Church with this scapular and wear it in a spirit of faith shall enjoy Mary's special protection during life and may have confidence that she will secure for them such graces as are necessary to make a good end.

The second privilege of the Carmelite scapular is called the Sabbatine privilege. It is based on a so-called Bull of Pope John XXII in which he says that the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and recommended to him in a special manner the Carmelite Order and all those associated with it, promising that in addition to the indulgences granted to them she would liberate them from Purgatory on the Saturday after their death. The conditions laid down for the obtaining of this privilege include a number of good works in Mary's honor. Hence, although the Bull referred to be not genuine, it is permissible to believe that Mary will obtain the early release from Purgatory of those who wear her scapular and perform the other conditions.

Besides the Carmelite scapular the other scapulars of the Blessed Virgin are the black scapular of the Seven Dolors, in association with the Servite Order; the blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception, associated with the Theatine nuns; the black and red scapular of Mary Help of the Sick, allied with the Clerks Regular of Saint Camillus; the white scapular of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, originated by the congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; the white scapular of the Mother of Good Counsel, bearing the

miraculous image of Genezzano, and under the direction of the Augustinians.

Ecclesiastical rules require that persons wearing scapulars be invested with them by a duly authorized priest. Since 1910 it is permitted to wear a single medal, known as a scapular medal, instead of one or several of the small scapulars.

The medieval guilds were associations of persons having the same calling or craft and, in an age when religion permeated every phase of human life, they were naturally to a great extent religious in character. As a member of a guild a man learned and worked at the trade by which he earned his living, and joined with the other members in social intercourse, the performance of specified good works and religious exercises. They were especially characterized by their devotion to Mary, and their evening service known as the Salve, as well as their observance of Saturday in her honor, have already been referred to.

When the guilds were suppressed at the Reformation it was largely because of these religious features, but this aspect of them was soon revived in the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Sodality was founded in 1563 by the Jesuit, Father John Leunis, a Belgian. The members were recruited from among the students at the Roman College, who took Mary for the patroness and sought her help in their effort to lead a devout life. By 1569 the sodality had grown so large that it was necessary to divide it into a Primary and a Secondary Sodality, the meetings of the first being held in the Church of the Annunciation, which is therefore the headquarters of the sodality.

From Rome the association spread not only over Europe but to Canada, China and Turkey, always under the direction of

Jesuit Fathers, and numbering among its members countless young men who attained to eminent sanctity and, indeed, many who are now canonized saints.

At the suppression of the Jesuits the sodalities languished and generally perished, with the exception of the Primary Sodality at Rome. Father Delpuits, a former Jesuit, revived the sodality in France in 1801, and since 1825, when the membership in the primary sodality was offered to all the faithful, including women, its growth has been constant and rapid.

The first congregation of Children of Mary was founded in Paris at the Convent of the Sacred Heart by the foundress of the Order, Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat about 1818. Its members were the most devout of the older girls. In 1832 Mother Thuillier, a religious of the convent at Lyons, formed an association of former pupils of the house, to which other women were subsequently admitted. Father Druilhet, S.J., compiled the rules, which are still the guide of the Children of Mary of the Sacred Heart. The medal, first struck in 1824, bears on one side the Sacred Heart and the words *Cor meum jungatur vobis*, and on the other the figure of the Blessed Virgin.

The Confraternity of Children of Mary Immaculate was established in 1847 in schools of the Sisters of Charity and adopted as its badge what is known as the miraculous medal. This was first struck in 1832 according to the description of Sister Catherine Laboure, a member of the Paris community, to whom the Blessed Virgin appeared three times in 1830. She appeared as if standing on a globe with rays of light streaming from her hands, symbolizing graces to be bestowed on those who asked for them, while about her was an oval frame bearing the words: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to

thee.” The feast of Mary’s manifestation under the title of the miraculous medal was instituted by Pope Leo XIII and assigned to November 27.

Our Lady in Art

For many centuries the faith and love of the Christian world found its expression in pictorial representations. Before the invention of printing the scarcity of books put learning beyond the reach of the majority of the people, but learning was not needed to understand the pictures which they saw constantly before their eyes on the walls and windows of churches and monasteries, and carved from stone in their niches. And the greater part of the artistic treasures that the world now possesses would be lost to it if Mary were taken away.

The earliest representation of her is a fresco on the wall of the catacomb of Priscilla, originally crude and now partly obliterated, but already in its general features the type that was to prevail throughout the ages – a woman seated, with her Child clinging to her breast. Some authorities consider that Mary is represented in the other catacomb figures of a woman standing alone with arms outstretched in prayer.

When the Christians emerged from the catacombs and were free to depict religious subjects publicly, a number of pictures of Mary appeared which were said to be authentic portraits and ascribed to Saint Luke. This, however, was impossible as human portraiture was forbidden by the Mosaic Law.

They followed a stiff, conventional type, the prevalent standard of the age and, authentic or not, they were intended to represent Mary. Accordingly they were held in great veneration, being honored in costly shrines, placed

upon the masts of ships, carried into the battlefield and borne home in triumph by victorious armies.

After Mary’s vindication at the Council of Ephesus the artists directed all their efforts to depicting her in triumph and glory, portraying her enthroned, attired in royal raiment and surrounded by a court of honor. This type was repeated with few modifications in the mosaics which began about this time to be the chief artistic medium, and continued through the decline of art in general. With the introduction of miniature painting art revived, but as yet the representations of Mary had nothing of the human tenderness that characterizes the true Madonna. This, the Italian term of respectful address to a woman, has through the custom of centuries become consecrate to Mary in art. Strictly speaking it refers to the Mother and Child, but it has come to be applied to every representation of Mary, whether alone or with other figures, at every stage of her life, in every aspect of her character.

The devotion to the Passion which characterized the Catholic centuries found its artistic expression in depicting Mary as the Mother of Sorrows. All that the artists possessed of human tenderness went into these tragic groups in which Mary, in seven-fold fulfillment of Simeon’s prophecy, contemplates the lifeless, tortured Body of her Son, either hanging upon the Cross or lying in her lap. Such a representation of her is called a Pietà, from the Italian word for pity or compassion.

A tender Mother, she smiles from a thousand canvases, either holding her Divine Child in her arms or kneeling in adoration of His Divinity. Even in the ineffably beautiful Annunciation pictures the startled maiden is invested with the dignity of her mystical motherhood. This is especially evident in the lovely “Mater Admirabilis,” painted on a wall

of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Rome, which depicts Mary in her girlhood in the Temple.

The faith of the medieval artists loved to depict her in circumstances familiar to themselves, in the sumptuous attire of a noble Italian or Spanish lady, resplendent in silks and embroidery, and adorned with gold and jewels. This was partly through a desire thus to lavish upon her the treasures of the world and partly by way of symbolizing the hidden beauties of this elect daughter of the King.

No artist felt that he had accomplished anything until he had painted a Madonna and many of them painted nothing else. Mary, the Mother of Christ, is the Queen of Christian art, from the crude drawings on the walls of the catacombs down through the charming groups of Giotto, the founder of Italian art, and the heavenly Fra Angelico, the Saint John of painting, to that climax of all art, Raphael’s Sistine Madonna, in which the artist has succeeded in putting upon canvas that commingling of heaven and earth which took place in Mary.

May the Virgin Mary with her loving Child bless us. Amen.

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *Mary The Mother: Her Life And Catholic Devotion To Her* by Blanche Mary Kelly, Litt.D. The edition used was published in 1919. It has a dedication "to the Son of Mary this book in his mother's honor".

It has the Imprimatur of Cardinal Patrick Joseph Hayes, Archdiocese of New York, New York, 1919.

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